

# Robert Louis Stevenson

BERTHA E. BUSH



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
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INSTRUCTOR LITERATURE SERIES

Story of  
Robert Louis Stevenson

BY

*Bertha E. Bush*



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DANSVILLE, N. Y.

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## Robert Louis Stevenson

“He’s better to play with than any boy that ever lived.”

Robert Louis Stevenson’s school-boy stepson must have said this, for it was certainly true.

A grown man playing with toy tin soldiers! Yes, he used to play with tin soldiers with his boy stepson for hours at a time, but it was no common game that they played. They had a great map drawn on the attic floor with mountains and rivers, towns, bridges and roads laid out. It was a real little war that they carried out, and they did all the things that must be done in a war. They built bridges and destroyed them. They had good weather and bad weather, and good and bad roads.

They had certain parts of the country which were unhealthy and when their armies marched through those sections they threw dice to determine what their loss by sickness should be. They had little carts for their ammunition, and when one cart was empty they had to wait till another was drawn up. They planned their marches and campaigns as carefully as real generals, and their wars lasted for weeks.



They even had two newspapers which described the operations of the war until the boy captured the editor of one of them—a tin editor or something like that and ordered him to be hanged. Then Stevenson founded a third paper whose editor was more fortunate.

The attic was cold and only half lighted. It was so low that they could not stand upright except in the middle of it. It could only be reached by a ladder. Yet there the man and the boy played for hours at a time, forgetting the cold and discomfort in their eagerness. Yes, they enjoyed every minute.

You would like to have had Robert Louis Stevenson go to school with you, for there never was a boy who made up more interesting plays. I almost believe there never was another who made up such good ones. No bad weather, no school-boy trial nor illness could destroy his good humor or his gaiety. He was not a big strong hearty boy—more's the pity!—There was hardly a year when he was not sick for weeks. His last years were a long fight for life. Trying to find health he traveled from one country to another and died at last in the South Sea Islands with two oceans between him and his beloved Scotland. But from earliest childhood no sickness or trial or suffering, cloudy skies or gloomy circum-



stances could make him anything but cheery, helpful and merry. He was one of the bravest men that ever lived: and, certainly, he was one of the most pleasant to live with.

When he was a little bit of a boy, his mother asked him one evening what he had been doing that day. "I've been playing all day," he answered. "At least I've been making myself cheerful."

He always made himself cheerful. When he had to do something that he did not like, he would invent a play that turned it into fun. When he was four years old, he got a little sword for a Christmas present and felt that now he was a real soldier. "I can tell you, papa," he said, "it's a silver sword and a gold sheath and the boy's very well off and quite contented." But it was a cold evening and he was a little sick boy. His mother thought he would better wear a shawl. At first he was very much distressed, for soldiers did not wear shawls, but pretty soon he said, "It will look like a night-march, mamma," and went on playing with his sword beneath the shawl, very happily.

You can read about some of these plays in his *Child's Garden of Verses*, which is pretty sure to be in your school library. There you will find something of how the little boy felt in



the poem called "Northwest Passage." It tells how he hated to leave the pleasant company of grown-ups sitting by the fire and go through the dark halls and the long cold stairway up to bed. He named it so because it seemed to him that that long dark journey to his room seemed as full of perils to a child as the Northwest Passage to the Pole, that so many explorers have died trying to find, was to them. See what a little hero he was about it. He says—

"Must we to bed indeed? Well then,  
Let us arise and go like men,  
And face with an undaunted tread  
The long black passage up to bed."

Here is another little bed-time play when he made believe that he was a sailor:—

"My bed is like a little boat;  
Nurse helps me in when I embark;  
She girds me in my sailor's coat  
And starts me in the dark—

And sometimes things to bed I take  
As prudent sailors have to do;  
Perhaps a slice of wedding-cake,  
Perhaps a toy or two.

All night across the dark we steer;  
But when the day returns at last,  
Safe in my room beside the pier  
I find my vessel fast."



Little Louis Stevenson did not like to go to bed before dark, and all the boys and girls who read this will sympathize with him. When he was six years old, his mother wrote in her journal in April this little entry about him. (They used to call him Smout which means in Scotch a young salmon or small fry. It was like calling him a little fish:)

“Smout can’t understand the days getting longer and says he would rather go to bed at the seven o’clock that used to be.”

Poor little fellow! We would all rather go to bed at seven in winter when it is dark than in the long, pleasant evenings of summer. When he was grown up, he remembered this feeling and wrote it in the bright little poem called “Bed in Summer:”

“In winter I get up at night,  
And dress by yellow candle-light.  
In summer, quite the other way,  
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see  
The birds still hopping on the tree,  
Or hear the grown-up people’s feet  
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day?”



There were other times when he had to stay in bed by day because he was sick, but he turned even these into a play. He says—

‘When I was sick and lay a-bed,  
I had two pillows at my head,  
And all my toys beside me lay  
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so,  
I watched my leaden soldiers go,  
With different uniforms and drills,  
Among the bed clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets  
All up and down among the sheets;  
Or brought my trees and houses out  
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still  
That sits upon the pillow-hill,  
And sees before him, dale and plain,  
The pleasant land of Counterpane.’

A good many times he had bad dreams which were due to illness. Once he dreamed that he had to swallow the world, and he thought of how big it was and how many people it held on it till he was overwhelmed with terror. It was this idea which made him write first for the *Child's Garden of Verses*—

‘The world is so great and I am so small,  
I do not like it at all, at all.’



But he would not let that stand. It was not Stevenson's way. Instead he changed it to—

“The world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.”

Can we not see his very spirit in the change?

But sometimes the poor little boy could not dream even bad dreams. There were nights when he could not sleep all night long, but coughed until it seemed to him that his shaken little body would be broken to pieces. Then his kind nurse, Alison Cunningham, would take him up in her arms and carry him to the window where they would look across the dark street to see other lighted windows and wonder if other little sick boys and their nurses were there waiting for the morning. Stevenson was very grateful to this good nurse all his life. He says, “It seems to me that I should have died if I had been left there alone to cough and weary in the darkness. But my nurse was more patient than I can suppose of an angel; hours together she would help and console me—till the whole sorrow of the night was at an end with the first of that long string of country carts that, in the dark hours of the morning, with the neighing of horses, the cracking of whips, the shouts of the drivers, and a hundred



other wholesome noises, creaked, rolled and pounded past my window."

Sometimes the little boy's father used to come in and tell him stories when he could not sleep or was waked by bad dreams. They were lively stories of travel by coach or horseback with made-up conversations with guards, coachmen, or innkeepers. Once when Louis was a very little child, he accidentally locked himself in a room alone. His little exploring fingers turned the key in the lock but could not turn it back according to directions. There was nothing to do but send for the locksmith to open the door. It was growing dark and the little boy, shut up alone, became very much frightened. Then his father sat down beside the keyhole and told him stories until the little fellow forgot all about his fears. The locksmith came before they dreamed of looking for him.

Louis Stevenson's father could tell stories well, for he used to put his own self to sleep telling himself stories every night. When Louis was little he did about the same thing, but he sang his stories instead of telling them. He called them his "songstries." A good many of the ideas in them were taken from the Bible. Louis was very fond of the Bible. His nurse used to read it to him ever so much. The song-



stries were full of fine-sounding words. Little Louis said that he "loved lovely words." He used to say over and over with delight "Jehovah Tsidkenu" although he had no notion what it meant. The songstries were in very good rhythm for a little boy, but the ideas in them were not much connected. It is pretty certain that little Louis himself, although he took such pleasure in them, had no very clear idea of what he meant in them. Yet, I think no one but a little poet would have made them up.

When he was with other children, there was no playmate so merry or so full of interesting ideas for games. In winter or summer, out of doors or in the house, Louis could always think of a fine game to play. He had a whole flock of cousins and they held him as a "small sickly prince" over them and liked nothing so much as playing the games he planned for them.

His grandfather was an old Scotch minister who lived at Colinton Manse. He had had thirteen children, and some of his grandchildren were almost always at the manse. This was the place where little Louis liked to go best of all. His grandmother was dead and his beloved Aunt Jane kept the house there and mothered all her nieces and nephews. Sometimes there were a dozen children at once



staying at the manse. This Aunt Jane was the one who was so good to him that he wrote in the *Child's Garden of Verses*—

“Chief of our aunts—not only I,  
But all your dozen of nurslings cry—

What did the other children do?  
And what were childhood, wanting you?”

In Colinton Manse, Stevenson turned everything into wonderland for himself and his cousins. Here in the court where the fresh-cut grass was laid, Louis and the rest used to make “round holes in the cool green herb” and fancy themselves birds in nests. “It did not take a great height, in those days, to lift us from the ground,” he says; “so when we shut our eyes, we were free to imagine ourselves in the fork of an elm bough, or half-way down a cliff among a colony of gulls and gannets.”

Then there was the garden and the lawn—“a perfect goblet for sunshine”—he called it. In this garden they played a dreadful giant named Bunker lived. Every day the cousins slew him with great heroism, and every day he came to life to be killed again. Here was the lilac bush which they called a tree of death and played that even to stand in its shadow was fatal. Here was the great laurel tree where little Louis



used to crouch with his gun in his hand "hunting antelopes." He imagined so keenly that afterward, when he remembered it, it seemed to him that he had seen a herd of them sweep down the lawn and around the tree. On one side of the manse was the church-wall, and the children called the dark walk overhung with trees that went beside it the Witches' Walk and used to play a witch game there. Naturally the grandfather did not like to have the cousins step on his garden-beds. They believed that he used to measure their shoes at night to see which sole had left a track; and so, when they were unlucky enough to step in the beds, they made the mark longer by rubbing the foot along. It was of this garden that Stevenson wrote in the *Child's Garden of Verses* "To Willie and Henrietta:"

"You in a garden green  
With me were king and queen,  
Were hunter, soldier, tar,  
And all the thousand things that children are."

Once little Louis and some other children were playing shipwrecked sailors, and they grew so excited that they really forgot that it was all a make believe. They were playing that they were cast on a desert island with nothing to eat but the poison buttercups that grew



around, and they really ate some and were made very ill by it.

Inside the old manse there were all kinds of foreign curiosities which were very fascinating to little Louis. There were relics from all over the world, for the family were great travelers; but I think Louis was most interested in the Indian idols that rattled whenever he shook them and which he believed to be full of treasure. You may read about these things in the poem "To Minnie." Here, in the dining-room, when the lamp was lighted, little Louis used to creep into the dark space behind the big sofa to play hunter. This is what he tells us of in "The Land of Story Books:"

‘Now with my little gun, I crawl  
All in the dark along the wall,  
And follow round the forest track  
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,  
All in my hunter’s camp I lie,  
And play at books that I have read  
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,  
These are my starry solitudes;  
And there the river by whose brink  
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away  
As if in firelit camp they lay,



And I, like to an Indian scout  
Around their party prowled about."

It was very likely here in the manse with his cousins that he played that delightful "Good Play :"

"We built a ship upon the stairs,  
All made of the back-bedroom chairs,  
And filled it full of sofa pillows  
To go a-sailing on the billows.

We took a saw and several nails,  
And water in the nursery pails ;  
And Tom said, 'Let us also take  
An apple and a slice of cake—  
Which was enough for Tom and me  
To go a-sailing on till tea.'"

One winter a boy cousin came to live in his home. What a good time the two boys had together! Even their eating was turned into a play. Robert, the cousin, ate his porridge with sugar and said that it was a country continually buried under snow. Louis took his with milk and explained that it was a country overflowed by a flood and gradually disappearing.

Their chief delight was in two kingdoms which they made up for themselves. Louis's was named Nosingtonia and Robert's Encyclopaedia. They made careful maps of these countries. They traded back and forth. They



had wars. They made treaties. They did everything that real kings would be supposed to do.

When Louis grew older he was sent to various schools. His schoolmates found him always "ready for his lessons, ready for a story, ready for fun." He was a reckless rider and had a brown pony he called Purgatory. He traveled a good deal, for his mother was not well and they went to various places for her health. The boy Louis was eagerly interested in seeing Pompeii and the Catacombs at Rome, and Venice.

All through his boyhood, he had the idea that he was going to be an author. His first manuscript was prepared before he was old enough to write. It was a history of Moses. His mother took pity on him as he was printing it laboriously and offered to help him out by writing down what he told her. Then Louis illustrated his story with what he thought very fine colored pictures. His elders, however, thought the pictures funny, for he had put tobacco pipes into the mouths of Moses, Pharaoh and the other Egyptians.

When he was fourteen, he composed the words of an opera. The name of it was "The Baneful Potato." All that anyone remembers of it now are the names of two characters, Dig-

him-up-o, the gardener, and Seek-him-out-o, the policeman, and the first line of a song sung by the heroine, "My own dear casement window."

He was always starting school-boy magazines and writing stories and illustrating them. We can think how the schoolboys must have loved to have him read the stories to them.

His father wanted him to be a civil engineer, and he studied for this for some time; but he never wanted to be anything but a writer and at last he gained his father's consent to take up this profession.

For a long time he made no money with his work, but still he kept on. He thought that money could not compare with good work, and he was bound to learn to do good work as a writer whether he made a living or not.

His first really successful book was *Treasure Island*, written in 1881, fifteen years after he had begun his writing for the press. It happened to be written in this way. Stevenson's school-boy stepson, Lloyd Osborne, had come home for the holidays. Stevenson was anxious that the boy should have a good time. Lloyd liked to draw and paint and turned one of the rooms of the cottage into an art gallery. Stevenson acted as showman in this art gallery, and sometimes he would draw and paint with



Lloyd. One day he drew a map of an imaginary island and colored it elaborately. He put in harbors and bays and rivers and named it Treasure Island. As he looked at the map, a story seemed to come to him. He drew a piece of paper toward him and began making out a list of chapters.

The idea possessed him. Every day he wrote out a chapter and in the evening read it aloud to the school-boy, his wife, and his father, who soon became as interested in it as Lloyd himself. Then a friend happened to visit them who was seeking a tale for a publisher. He put the story in his pocket and carried it away to see if it would suit. It suited. Indeed, it quickly became famous. It was translated into many languages. Great men—and little ones too—praised it. It was a wonderful success. But it must not be thought that the success was gained in that hasty writing. Stevenson had worked all his life to gain that success. He was more careful in his writing than any school-boy dreams of being in his compositions, no matter how exacting may be the teacher to whom they are to be handed in. He thought that a copy sent to the press needed much writing beforehand to make it good enough.

“I imagine,” he said, “that nobody ever had such pains to learn a trade as I had; but slog-

ged at it day in and day out and I frankly believe (thanks to my dire industry), I have done more with smaller gifts than almost any man of letters in the world."

It was his modesty that made him say that he had small gifts. He really had great gifts; but it does seem true that no other man of letters ever worked so patiently and bravely under so many disadvantages as Robert Louis Stevenson.

His greatest disadvantage was his ill-health. We have been talking about the bright little poems in the *Child's Garden of Verses*. They were largely written with his left hand in a darkened room. Some of them were dictated because he was not able to write. Some of them could not even be dictated aloud but were spelled off with the deaf and dumb alphabet. The room was darkened because he was almost blind from ophthalmia. He wrote with his left hand because his right was done up in a sling; and he could not dictate aloud because he had just had a hemorrhage that was almost fatal and the doctor had forbidden him even to speak, lest he should bring on another.

"Well," said his wife as she came into the room after the doctor had given his decision, "I suppose this is the very best thing that could have happened."



She meant just the opposite. She spoke in bitterness, as little girls sometimes say exactly the opposite of what they mean and expect people to understand them.

But Stevenson did not understand, or, if he did, he chose to take her words in another way. He seized a bit of paper and wrote—he could not speak—“Why how odd! I was just going to say those very words.”

He loved Scotland, his native country, dearly, but his health would not let him stay there. For many years he was a wanderer, settling now in one place, now in another, trying everywhere to find a climate in which he could live. He spent some time in the Riviera by the Mediterranean. Then he tried to live in England but could not keep well there. Then he came to the United States, but here he did not find health, and it was decided that the best thing for him would be to cruise on the warm waters of the southern Pacific Ocean. For three years he sailed up and down among the islands, now stopping at one and now at another and really gaining strength. Then he decided to make a home for himself in one of the South Sea Islands where there would be no winter to chill him. They chose one of the Samoan Islands called Upolu. Here Stevenson purchased some four hundred acres.

in the bush. Before a house could be built, the ground had to be cleared, for the vegetation was so thick and rank that Mrs. Stevenson could not make her way through it to see where the house should stand.

A road was cut through the wild forest. Timbers were brought and the house was built. The road to it had to be cleared again and again. It was at last made so wide that in good weather a wagon could pass over it; but to the last all the carrying for the house was done by big New Zealand pack horses. Stevenson himself once described this island in a letter to some little sick girls in England. This is what he said about it:

“The island is not very long and is extremely narrow. The sea beats round it very hard, so that it is difficult to get to shore. There is only one harbor where ships come, and even that is very wild and dangerous; four ships of war were broken there a while ago.

“Away at one end of the village lives the king of the whole country. His palace has a thatched roof which rests upon posts; there are no walls, but when it rains, they have Venetian blinds which they let down between the posts, making all very snug. There is no furniture and the king and the queen and the courtiers sit and eat on the floor which is of gravel.



“The road to this lean man’s house (he meant himself by the lean man), is up hill all the way and through forests; the trees are not so much unlike those at home, only here and there some very queer ones are mixed with them—cocoanut palms, and great trees that are covered with bloom like red hawthorn but not near so bright; and from them all thick creepers hang down like ropes.

“On the way up to the lean man’s house, you pass a little village, all of the houses like the king’s house, so that as you ride by you can see everybody sitting at dinner, or, if it is night, lying in their beds by lamplight; because all the people are terribly afraid of ghosts and would not lie in the dark for anything. After the village, there is only one more house, and that is the lean man’s. For the people are not very many and live all by the sea, and the whole inside of the island is desert woods and mountains. When the lean man goes into the forest, he is very much ashamed to own it, but he is always in a terrible fright. The wood is so great, and empty, and hot, and it is always filled with curious noises; birds cry like children, and bark like dogs; and he can hear people laughing and felling trees and the other day he heard the noise of an earthquake away down below him in the bowels of the earth.

All these noises make him feel lonely and scared and he doesn't quite know what he is scared of. Once when he was just about to cross a river, a blow struck him on the top of his head, and knocked him head-foremost down the bank and splash into the water. It was a nut, I fancy, that had fallen from a tree, by which accident people are sometimes killed."

Stevenson grew quite well and strong in this Samoan home which he named Vailima. He wrote:

"It is like a fairy story that I should have recovered liberty and strength, and should go around among my fellow-men, boating, riding, bathing, toiling hard with a wood-knife in the forest."

Here he lived for three years with his wife and mother and stepson and stepdaughter and a little boy named Austin Strong who was the son of Stevenson's stepdaughter, and his ward. Mr. Stevenson enjoyed very much the living amid the strange tropic scenery which he had dreamed of and made plays about when he was a little boy in Colinton Manse. But little Austin liked to hear stories of his guardian's childhood and to play that he was in the places where Mr. Stevenson had lived as a boy. Mr. Stevenson wrote in a letter:

"Here are a lot of curious and interesting



things that Austin sees all round him every day; and when I was a child I used to play and pretend to myself that I saw things of the same kind—that the rooms were full of orange and nutmeg trees, and the cold town gardens outside the window were alive with parrots and lions. What do you think that Austin does? He makes believe just the other way; he pretends that the strange great trees with their broad leaves and slab-sided roots are European oaks; and the places up the road he calls old-fashioned, far-away European names, just as if you were to call the cellar-stair and corner of the next street Upolu and Savaii.”

One afternoon after a happy day at work, Mr. Stevenson came gaily down to his lunch. As he was helping his wife to spread it in the veranda, he put both hands to his head and cried “What’s that?” Then he dropped down beside her. The native servants helped her lift him up very tenderly and ran with all speed to call the doctors. But he did not speak or know them again and in the evening he died.

They took down the great flag that flew over the house and wrapped it around him. Then the brown native chiefs came quietly and lovingly and covered his body with fine mats as was the custom of the country. They would not go away but sat beside him all night. It

would show little love for him, they said, if they did not spend their last night beside him. Over his body they chanted prayers in Latin and Samoan.

"I am a poor Samoan and ignorant," said one old chief as he crouched beside the bier. "Others are rich and can give \*Tusitala the parting presents of rich fine mats; I am poor and can give nothing this last day he receives his friends. Yet, I am not afraid to come and look the last time in my friend's face. Who was our support but Tusitala? We were in prison, and he cared for us. We were sick, and he made us well. We were hungry, and he fed us. The day was no longer than his kindness. You are great people and full of love. Yet who among you is so great as Tusitala? What is your love to his love?"

Forty men were sent up the mountain to clear a road to the place where he had once said he wished his grave might be. The Samoans bore his casket up the steep and his friends followed on foot, for the path was so rocky no vehicle could go over it. Here they buried him with a verse from the Samoan Bible on one side of his tomb and on the other the

\*Tusitala was the name the Samoans called him. It meant "Teller of Tales." This old chief had been in a rebellion and had been helped by Stevenson.



requiem that he himself had written long before:

Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie,  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:  
*Here he lies where he longed to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.*

Since his death the Samoan chiefs have forbidden the use of guns on the hillside where he lies that the birds may sing there undisturbed.

I think everybody who know Stevenson loved him. And I think I know the reason. It was because he loved everybody. Wherever he went, he made friends. When he was a young man he had written down his three chief wishes, as boys and girls who read fairy stories sometimes do. They were first good health, second, a small competence, and third, most desired, chief of all, friends. The other wishes did not come true, but the third did. Friends he always had, white friends and dusky friends, friends of high degree and friends in the lowest walks of life, child friends and friends who were old people—friends from one end of the earth to the other. How did he make friends with these brown people and black people and

yellow people? Because he did not think of their color; to him they were just human brothers. When he wanted to learn a legend of Polynesia, he told them some story of old times in his own land and they were quick to respond.

As he traveled from country to country and sailed from island to island he found friends everywhere. Cruising among the Gilbert Islands he came to one where the king allowed no white man to land; but he liked Stevenson's looks and let him come in as his own guest. This savage king, who had the power of life and death over his followers, became as devoted to Mr. Stevenson as a child to a father. I am afraid we would have laughed at this island king, for sometimes he wore a woman's dress that he had picked up somewhere, and sometimes a naval uniform and sometimes a queer costume of red silk or green velvet that had been made for him on the island. But Stevenson never laughed at his appearance. When the time came for Stevenson to go on, the King could not be consoled. He refused to eat and said sadly:

"I very sorry you go. Miss Stlevens he good man, woman he good man, boy he good man; I think Miss Stlevens he big chiep (chief) all the same cap'n man-o'wa'. I very sorry.



My patha (father) he go, my uncle he go, Miss Stlevens he go: all go. You no see king cry before. King all the same man: feel bad, he cry. I very sorry."

And the king cried and sent Mr. Stevenson one present after another of his choicest possessions.

One of the islands which Stevenson visited was Molokai where the lepers are sent. The lepers too loved him. He used to play croquet with the little leper girls in the Home; and the last thing he heard as he went to the ship was their calling to him to come back and play some more. Mother Mary Anne, the matron of the Home, advised him to wear gloves when he played with the leper children, but he would not do it because he said it would remind them of their infirmity. After he went away, he sent Mother Mary Anne a grand piano for her leper girls.

When he was in Samoa, the natives brought him all their troubles to be solved. The words of the Samoan chief at his bier were true. You would see long lines of them coming to his home with presents in baskets. Old gentlemen would bring him squealing pigs and beg him to tell them about their taxes; others would ask him to take charge of the money of the village and send off for the roof-iron for a pro-

posed church, and so on; in every matter they asked his advice.

Mr. Stevenson would sigh sometimes when he saw them coming for he was very busy, but he never failed to meet and hear them.

Some of the Samoan chiefs whom he had helped, cleared a new road to his plantation, bearing all the labor and expenses themselves and ever after it was called "The Road of the Loving Heart."

He had animal friends too. No dog was happier than Stevenson's dog Bogue, or Woggs as he was more often called, who went with Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson on many journeys and when he died was buried in their garden. Once in Samoa Stevenson found a crowd of natives watching a dog-fight. He rushed up to stop it, his anger blazing; but he was so angry that all the Samoan words went out of his head except the one for "cowards." He said this again and again, and that dog-fight was soon stopped.

Another time Stevenson saw a dog ill-treated by his owner and interfered. The owner was very angry.

"It's not your dog," he cried out.

"It's God's dog," said Stevenson, "and I'm here to protect it."

Robert Louis Stevenson's whole life was a struggle, and the bravest struggle you can



imagine, against ill-health and the peevishness and miseries of ill-health. He could not conquer his sickness. Death claimed him when he was only forty-five. But he conquered everything but the actual sickness. He was never cross nor fretful, never miserable nor discouraged nor weary of living. He never gave up to his suffering one bit.

"I never was bored in my life," he said one time after he had spent weeks in a sick-room, not allowed by the doctor to speak. As long as he could, he would write. When the doctor would not let him do that, he would find some other occupation and be so interested in it that the hours would pass before he knew. Sometimes the slim fingers that were not allowed to hold a pen would build cardboard houses. Sometimes he would model little figures in clay or wax. One time when they would not let him talk or write, he spent his time in learning to play the piano and found great delight in it. Another time he took up wood-engraving. He never lacked for an amusement. He was the brightest, cheeriest companion you can think of, always gay and merry and sympathetic, seeing fun in everything and making fun wherever he went.

When you are older, you will like to read Stevenson's books, and to learn about his

patient work. There was never a man who worked harder or won success under a greater handicap.

When he was in Samoa, he used to call his whole household, white, brown and black, into the great hall on Sabbath nights and read prayers. These are some of the prayers he wrote for this:

“Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind. Help us—with the grace of courage that we be none of us cast down. Give us to labor smiling. As the sun returns in the east, so let our patience be renewed with dawn; as the sun lightens the world, so let our loving-kindness make bright this house.”

Robert Louis Stevenson did more in forty-five invalid years than a well man in a long life-time might be supposed to accomplish. But the greatest thing he did was to be so brave and loving that he fills the hearts of all who know about him with courage and cheer.

*Child's Garden of Verses*, complete, is No. 152 of **The Instructor Literature Series**.



## THE LAND OF STORY-BOOKS

At evening when the lamp is lit,  
Around the fire my parents sit;  
They sit at home and talk and sing,  
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun I crawl  
All in the dark along the wall,  
And follow round the forest track  
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,  
All in my hunter's camp I lie,  
And play at books that I have read  
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,  
These are my starry solitudes;  
And there the river by whose brink  
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away  
As if in firelit camp they lay,  
And I, like to an Indian scout,  
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,  
Home I return across the sea,  
And go to bed with backward looks  
At my dear land of Story-books.

—*From Child's Garden of Verse.*



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